# A DOMESTIC DIFFICULTY.

BY EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN,

*Author of "Barbara's Brothers," "Roger's Revenge," "Little Lady Clare," etc.*

"Conny, this is your home." *p.* 179.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE END OF THE DIFFICULTY.

"Oh, mother dear, it will be so nice to have Claud and Ronald home again," said Conny one bright morning in April, as she came in with her hands full of flowers from the garden; "I am so glad it is a forward season, everything is looking so lovely, and you know they say that Oxford is a very cold place in winter, so I expect we shall be much more forward here. The Maréchal Niel rose in the greenhouse is covered with roses; I have been gathering all these for Ronald's room. Do you remember how fond he was of roses last summer? I know he will like them."

"Yes, dear, I have no doubt he will," said the mother, raising her clear soft eyes to her daughter's face, which was flushed with happiness, and alight with girlish pleasure; and something she read in the unconscious depths of those truthful eyes caused her to smile and sigh as she resumed her work, whilst Conny flitted about from vase to vase, putting a finishing touch to her handiwork, and talking all the while as she moved.

"And, mother, it is Ronald's birthday to-morrow, and he will come of age. I am so glad he did not have to spend his birthday at Oxford, it would have seemed so dry. I thought when people like Ronald came of age there was always rather a fuss. But here there will be nothing to mark the day, except that we have got some little presents for him."

Mrs. Callender smiled slightly.

"Perhaps he will find some way of marking it for himself, my love," she said, and Conny tripped away with her roses without pausing to ask what her mother meant.

"I do like boys about the house," she said, as she ran up to see that everything was in readiness for the return of the undergraduates. "It has been so strange this time since Charley went away. Before there was always Claud at home, but now we have been such a very small party. I wonder what Claud will be like; I think he may have improved. Father says that college life was just what he wanted to 'rub his angles off.' Certainly he was much nicer last autumn after he had made friends with Ronald. I am so glad they are such friends now. How Claud did dislike him once, and how vexed we all were when we first heard he was coming! It is funny how one changes as one grows older!"

Conny laughed a happy little laugh as she arranged her roses in a big china bowl taken from her own quarters, and placed them in different parts of the room to see where they looked best. She did not appear much older than the bright-faced maiden of a year back; and yet a keen eye might have detected a slight change, a deeper seriousness in the truthful eyes, visible in more thoughtful moments, and something of womanly softness mingling with the unstudied grace and buoyancy of childhood. A very sweet and happy maiden was Conny Callender, and it was no wonder her parents' glances often rested tenderly upon her just now as she flitted hither and thither about the grey old house, always busy, always bright and gay, and nearly always at work in the service of others.

"It is like having two brothers back," cried Conny, as they all stood in the hall welcoming the travellers, who drove up to the door in the mellow glow of a cloudless sunset. "Claud, how nice you look! I do believe you have

grown, and your moustache is—is—oh, quite fascinating, and so scrubby."

To Ronald she said little, but their hands met, and their eyes, and she suddenly felt a glow come over her face that made her glad to busy herself in seeing that the luggage was properly distributed, and taken up to the different rooms.

When she got back they were all having tea, and asking for news of Charley; and then Claud was called upon to tell all about his new life, and he did so with much more fun and readiness than he would have exhibited a year before. He was a good deal less conceited, and therefore a good deal better company than of old; and as he had lost his boyish self-complacency, he had increased in manliness and true good breeding. Ronald's example and the association with other men of his own age had done him great good, and his parents exchanged satisfied glances as the talk flowed on, and felt that in time they might have good cause to be proud of their son, who had of late been something of a source of anxiety to them.

The next day was spent in visiting old haunts. It was Ronald's twenty-first birthday, but he said he was too old for birthday treats in the way of picnics or *fêtes*. It was treat enough to be "at home," as he called it with a smile, and to wander about at will with Conny for his companion, though Claud and Clara were generally with them. Conny had a great deal to tell him of the people and what had happened during his absence, and she found that his interest in them had in no wise abated. After dinner, when the beauty of the moonlight night had tempted them out first to the terrace, and then into the garden itself, Conny asked him in her innocently free, frank fashion about his own property, and what he intended to do now that it had really passed into his own hands.

He was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"For a few months things will go on as before. The tenants do not wish to leave before midsummer, and I have no objection to their staying on, but after that I must go down and look into things seriously myself. Do you know your father has been good enough to say that he will come with me on my first visit, and put me in the way of understanding the business of the estate."

"Has he? Oh, then, you will be certain to have good advice. Father is capital with everything about land. I am so glad. When did you arrange it?"

"Oh, some time ago now," answered Ronald, abstractedly; but Conny was full of interest.

"And will mother go, too?"

"That depends."

"Depends upon what?"

Ronald suddenly turned and faced her in the moonlight. His face looked pale she fancied, but strangely resolute in expression. Conny suddenly thought almost for the first time in her life that Ronald would be as he grew older a remarkably handsome man. Hitherto she had never troubled to think about his looks, but they forced themselves upon her notice now.

"Conny," he said in low, vibrating accents, "it depends entirely upon you."

"Upon me, Ronald? Why, what can you mean?"

"May I tell you what I mean?" he asked gently.

She began to tremble very slightly, she knew not why. A wonderful premonition fell upon her—a sense of something strange and new and beautiful; she did not seek to analyse the feelings that crowded her mind, she let Ronald take her hand and hold it in his whilst he spoke.

"Conny," he said in that same deep tone which seemed to vibrate till it set her very heart-strings in a thrill, "I have thought of it so long, I have dreamed of it so often, but until to-day my lips were sealed; for though in honour I had felt bound to speak to your father of the feeling I had, I promised him not to tell you of it until I had reached what is called man's estate. Perhaps he thought me too young to know my own mind; but I know that I shall never, never change, never love anybody but you so long as I live."

She heard him, and she made no attempt to withdraw her hand. The moonlit garden seemed to swim before her eyes in a golden mist, and still the deep, thrilling tones continued speaking to her heart.

"Conny, we have talked sometimes, you and I together, of the home which is mine by inheritance, the home in which you have taught me that it is my duty to live. Conny, will you share that home with me? Will you teach me those duties you know and understand so much better than I? Will you put your dear hand in mine for life, and let us walk side by side along the path that must be mine to tread? I do not know how to tread it alone. All my dreams have been of sharing all with you. Conny, my darling, will you not answer me? Can you trust me? Can you love me? Can you say those sweet words which will give me the right some day to call you my very own—my wife?"

She was not trembling now, although everything still swam before her eyes in a golden mist; but she lifted her sweet face for a moment towards his, and then let it rest upon his shoulder; and he drew her to his heart, and held her very, very close, whilst the vow of eternal love and constancy was exchanged beneath the soft moonbeams and the steady glow of the changeless stars.

Presently, when the first passionate joy had subsided into a calmer feeling of happiness, they walked on again hand in hand.

"And now," said Ronald, "I think I can answer your question; I can almost say with certainty that your mother as well as your father will come with me in the summer when I visit my old home."

She looked at him questioningly.

"Because," he answered, tenderly, "I want you, my darling, to see it too; for we shall have so much to talk about and arrange, and your mother will take you under her wing if she comes with us. We shall have so much to settle in-doors and out before the house will be made ready for its mistress to come home to it."

A happy flush mantled Conny's cheek.

"Oh, Ronald, it sounds so strange to talk of any place but this as home. I can hardly believe it."

"That is why I want us to go there together, dearest, that you may get used to the idea. You know we are still young, and until I have finished my course at Oxford and taken my degree we must not think of getting married," and the young lover heaved a short sigh. "But I want you to see the house and know all about it, that we can make arrangements and plans for the future, as we could not do if you had not been there. And I want, when I first go amongst our tenants"—how proudly that little word "our" fell from Ronald's lips!—"for you to be with me, that they may learn to think of us both together, and to love me, as they will do, all the better for your sweet sake. Alone, I am such a clumsy, helpless fellow; but with you to help me I feel equal to anything."

She laughed, but laid a finger on his lips.

"You must not abuse yourself now," she said, "for you know you belong to me."

He caught the little hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Oh, my darling, how sweet it is to hear you speak those words; but you have not told me how you like my plan. Say, do you not think it is an excellent one?"

"I do indeed; I should love to see your house and to know every single thing about it. Are we to go in the summer? Oh, that will be delightful; something to look forward to whilst you are away."

"Then you think you will miss me a little when I go back? Tell me, have you missed me whilst I have been absent this time?"

"I'm afraid I have missed you most dreadfully," answered Conny, with a little rippling laugh; "I used to say to myself that it was Claud and Charley that I missed so much; but I know very well that it was not. I don't know what I shall do when you are away this time," and the sigh that accompanied these words was like music to Ronald's ears.

"Conny, Ronald, where are you?" called a voice from the neighbourhood of the house. "Do you know that you have been out nearly two hours, and that it is prayer time now?"

The culprits hurried in with flushed faces and a guilty air; but no remark was made by the head of the house, who led the way into the hall where prayers were read. And only at the conclusion of the short service, when the servants had gone, and the family remained alone, did Ronald himself betray what had passed, by leading Conny up to her father and saying—

"You gave me your consent to try—and I have succeeded. Will you not give us your blessing as a seal on the vows we have exchanged to-night?"

Well, there was no resisting an appeal of that kind. The father blessed the young lovers, and folded his daughter in his arms, whilst Ronald went up to Mrs. Callender and took her hands in his.

"Will you have me for a son, and let me feel the sweetness of having a mother again? I always envied other boys who had mothers to go to in their joys and sorrows; mine is but a name to me, hardly even a memory; but if I have the right to call you 'mother,' I shall envy no one."

"My dear boy," answered Mrs. Callender, with real affection and motherly yearning, "you have already made yourself one of us. There is no one to whom I would sooner give our sweet child. I know you will love and cherish her, and be a true son to us."

"I will indeed, God helping me," answered Ronald, with deep feeling; "you shall not trust me in vain. I will never rest content until the new home has been made a place of even greater happiness than the old. More than that I cannot say, having tasted so much of the peace and happiness that come to all beneath this roof. Dear mother, let me thank you once and for all, for all the kindness you have shown me, culminating to-night in this most wonderful and unselfish goodness. I will thank you in the way I know you would choose, by making Conny happy."

"I believe you will, my dear boy. God bless you and keep you both always, and make your lives a blessing to others likewise."

A few months later, on a glowing August day, Conny and Ronald stood side by side on a wide stone terrace, with flights of steps leading down into the beautifully kept and extensive flower gardens, now one blaze of summer glory, and taking her hand he said softly—

"Conny, this is your home. Do you think you can love it for my sake, dearest?"

"And for its own," answered Conny, her eyes alight with wondering admiration. "Oh, Ronald, you never told me half. It is more beautiful than words can say. Those wonderful cedars, those grand timber trees in the park, the water, the views, everything. I do not think I ever saw anything so lovely. You never told us half."

"I had almost forgotten myself, and often our childish recollections are so untrue. I know I used to think it big; but I fancied that might be all an idea of my own. I used to fancy it would look desolate to me coming back—alone; and so no doubt it would have done. But I am not alone, and I can love it both for what it once was to me, and what it will be when you and I, my darling, share it together as we shall before very long."

"It makes me feel so small and insignificant," said Conny, with a little laugh; "I cannot fancy having a bigger house than mother. Suppose I disappoint you? Suppose I do very badly? What will you do then, sir?"

His reply need hardly be chronicled; but it seemed to allay Conny's fears, if such they could be called, and as the lovers walked the beautiful gardens together they talked gravely, yet happily, of the life that lay before them, with its responsibilities and its opportunities.

"For I find myself a richer man than I expected, Conny. The railway coming near to some of the land at a distance, has increased its value very much. My guardian has been very careful during my minority, and I am much better off than my father was. There is a large sum lying by waiting for us to decide what to do with it. The only thing that does not satisfy me about my minority is that very little seems to have been given away in charity in any form, and I feel that we might well make amends for that by spending a considerable sum out of this accumulation of wealth upon our poor people in some form or another. What that form is to be we must wait and think. It may be there is a school wanted, or a cottage hospital, or even a new church, if the population has increased much. I know the parish church was never very large. Would you like to think of some plan of that kind? I think it would make us both happier than to spend it on ourselves."

"Oh, Ronald, yes," cried Conny, eagerly. "Just think how much we have ourselves—more than I ever dreamed of—as well as each other, which would be quite enough." Ronald bent to kiss her, his face alight with tender love. "Suppose we go round the village to-morrow, and see all the people who are your tenants."

"Our tenants," amended Ronald.

"Well, *our* tenants, if you like it better, and have a good talk to them and get to know them thoroughly. We shall be sure to hear from them what they most want—I mean we shall gradually be able to make it out from what they say. But if I have a choice, it would be for a dear little hospital, with a dispensary attached. You know at our home we so often feel the need of that. All the people come to mother, and she is almost as good as a doctor herself. But it would be better really to have a regular place; and so often when they are ill they need better care than they can get in their own homes, and a quiet, clean, cared-for hospital bed would be such a boon. I shall like that the best of all; but, of course, we must see what is most needed."

Ronald was infected by her enthusiasm.

"I think it very likely that that will be the greatest need. It very often is in a country place, where there is no hospital for miles round, and the doctor is off on his visits all day. Of course, the regular doctor will be the medical attendant there, with a salary in proportion to the work; but we would get a really qualified nurse, who thoroughly under-

stood out-patient work and dispensing, to be always on the place, ready to attend to any emergency, and to make up the doctor's prescriptions whenever he sent to the hospital. So many ladies in these days take up that sort of work, that I believe we could get just the right kind of person without any real difficulty. No nurse like a born lady—as I have found out before now."

"Oh, Ronald, I never did anything," said Conny, with a laugh, "I only read and chattered to you—it was not nursing really."

"Well, I know that the doctor said I must have been admirably nursed to get on so fast, and I quite agreed with him."

"He was chaffing you, I expect," said the girl, laughing; but Ronald shook his head, and would not admit it.

The project of the cottage hospital was not forgotten, and after a week had passed the scheme began to take definite form. The rector of the parish and the medical man both agreed that such an institution would be an immense boon both to this village and to those in the neighbourhood. The parish was very well worked in other respects by a devoted clergyman; but sickness was always a difficulty, as the county hospital was at a great distance, and generally so full that in-patients had no chance of admission for weeks. Fever cases could be treated nowhere but at the Union, and altogether a small hospital, with an isolation wing, would be a great blessing to all.

"Oh, I am so glad," cried Conny, when at the close of this happy visit the knotty point had really been decided. "I shall like that better than anything, and I am so pleased it is to be done. Oh, Ronald, how soon will it be built? How soon can we begin?"

"About as soon as we are married, dearest," he answered, drawing her hand within his arm and walking into the garden, after the fashion of lovers, who have an acknowledged right to leave all others and go off alone. "I shall have the estimates prepared at once, and I hope soon to start the building; so I think I can promise you that by the time I bring my wife home here the hospital will be ready to receive its first patient."

Her face was in a glow, but she said quite gently and naturally,

"I think that will be a beautiful idea. I should like to have something beyond ourselves to look forward to."

He held her hand closely in his.

"My darling, let us make that the motto of our life. God has been very good to us—has given us all things richly to enjoy. Let our mode of thanking Him be not to think only of ourselves, but to let our thoughts, our wealth, our purpose in life be to do good to others too, and let them share the happiness which has been so bountifully bestowed upon us."

THE END.

## A HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

These words seemed to be echoing in the air as I awoke on Christmas morning, bringing with them memories of past years when the old wish had been a reality for me; but now, here alone in a scantily-furnished room on the top floor of a dingy London lodging-house, my parents dead, and my few friends so far away that the railway fare to reach them would have emptied my purse, how could I be happy?

"This will never do," I exclaimed to myself, for want of some one better to talk to; and springing up, I tried to cast off my self-pitying mood, and to give some thought to the many others who were spending a lonely Christmas. In this very house, for instance, the probabilities were that my fellow-lodgers would have but a dreary day. A brilliant idea occurred to me: why should I not invite them all to dinner? A good old Yorkshire aunt had sent me up a well-filled hamper: cold roast fowls, a home-cured ham, and a large plum-pudding, besides apples and nuts and a good bunch of evergreens. When it arrived last night, in the first flush of pleasure I had decorated my little sitting-room, and this morning the scarlet berries and glossy leaves looked so bright that they gave me additional courage to carry out my plan. There was another room on the same floor as my little attics, belonging, as I knew, to an elderly spinster. Without giving myself time to think, I knocked at her door.

"'This will never do,' I exclaimed to myself."

"I have come to wish you a happy Christmas," I said, on entering. The moment was not propitious, the maiden-lady was sweeping her room, her spare figure attired in an old black skirt very much tucked up, and a faded red flannel dressing jacket, and round her deeply-lined face was tied a yellow handkerchief with large white spots.

"You might have spared yourself the trouble and not interrupted me in my work," she replied, tartly. "Can't you shut the door? Don't you see how the dust is blowing about?"

This was not encouraging, but I was not going to be beaten by the first obstacle, so obediently shut the door and returned to the charge. "I want you to come and have dinner with me; I have had some things sent me from the country, and I should so like you to come and share them."

"I tell you I'm busy; the only chance a decent woman gets of having a tidy up is when other folks have a holiday."

"But when you have finished you will come?" I urged; "I am so lonely."

"You, lonesome? you? And you are still young and not bad looking. What do you think my life is like, then?"

"Come and tell me all about it, and bring pussy with you," I said, persuasively, stroking a thin tortoise-shell cat that was looking on with great interest; "a cat always makes a room look home-like."

Day-dreams.

"Poor Minx! I don't know but what I will come; it is not everybody that would have thought of inviting her. Anyhow, I'll think about it; you had better go now."

And with that half promise I had to go. My next visit was to a young widow with three children. There I had a very different reception. The children were delighted with the proposition, and the poor mother was so grateful to me for bringing them a little brightness that she threw her arms round me and kissed me warmly. Caresses have not come much in my way of late years, and when I found myself on the stairs again, my heart was beating loudly, and there was such a lump in my throat that I had to wait a few minutes before making my last call. Some of the rooms were empty, and the only one left was that owned by the first-floor lodger, a strange, stern-looking man, of whom the other occupants stood rather in awe. I am such a thorough Radical that I was not at all overcome by my own presumption in inviting a denizen of the first-floor to take dinner in an attic—distinctions of class only amuse me. I knocked at the door, and received such a gruff "Come in" that all soft emotions vanished, and I entered prepared for a skirmish. How grimly he stared at me through his spectacles, never rising out of his leathern armchair, moving the shabby smoking-cap off his head, or even putting down his paper.

"What's your business, young woman? Just be quick and state it, and go!"

Nothing daunted, I advanced towards the hearth, calmly delivered my Christmas wishes, and invited him to meet my other visitors at dinner. He stared more than ever, and seemed to think I was suffering from an attack of amiable madness.

"Invite me to dinner! Bless my soul, what do you want to do that for?"

"For one reason, because there are two little boys coming, and I should be so glad if you would help me to make them enjoy themselves. I can see from your curiosities that you have been a traveller; they would be delighted if you told them some of your adventures. I might not be able to interest them."

"I dare say not," he answered, somewhat mollified.

"There is one thing I want you to do for me, please," I began.

"Ah! now I understand," he exclaimed, starting to his feet and buttoning up his pilot jacket as tightly as could be; "of course, you want something. Nothing for nothing and as little as may be for sixpence; that's your motto, eh, young woman?"

"I was going to ask you to *lend* me two chairs," I answered, as calmly as I could, "as I shall not have enough for my guests; but if you are not willing, I am sure Mrs. Wilson will oblige me."

"What, the widow? Oh, don't bother her. Here, you can have all the chairs, if you like; I thought you wanted something else. I'll take them up for you."

Up he came with them immediately, and as he brought them into my room, gave a critical look round.

"How do you manage to make things look so comfortable-like? They are shabby enough too, but that does not seem to make much difference. I suppose women do understand that sort of work; of course, it's the only thing they are fit for!" And with that parting shot he tramped downstairs again.

I am a staunch advocate for women's rights, but just then—as I had the potatoes to peel, the sauce to make, and the pudding to warm—I had to reserve my torrent of indignation for another opportunity. But that first-floor lodger shall not escape me; one of these days we will have that matter out together.

I had just finished my preparations for my visitors, and was twisting some old lace (remnants of former days) round my neck when the first knock came. Of course, it was the children. Mary, the youngest, ran up to me for a kiss.

"How pretty you look!" she cried, "and the room, and the holly, and everything! This is lovely!"

"Thank you, for such a sweeping compliment," I said, laughing. "Which do you think is the most comfortable seat for your mother?"

"Oh, this low one is nicest. Come, mother;" and the gentle little widow was soon comfortably settled in the cosiest corner.

Miss Hanway, the maiden lady, and Minx were next to arrive; and then there was such a noise on the stairs. I rushed to the door, threw it open, and there stood my gentleman visitor panting and puffing, and carrying, to my great amazement, a huge scuttleful of coals.

"It's no reason because I am going to eat your dinner that I should burn your coals," he explained, gruffly; and then walked to the hearth and made up such a fire!

The next thing to be done was to ask everyone their name, and introduce them to each other. By the time that was done the potatoes were ready; they were soon dished up, and we began our dinner.

"I can give you hot vegetables through having kitchen and dining-room together," I said; "but I must ask you to excuse plenty of deficiencies."

The event of the day was the arrival of the pudding, crowned with holly, and sprinkled with sugar in the regulation manner. The boys clapped their hands, and were delighted with what they were pleased to call the snow.

After dinner we gathered round the fire, which, under Mr. Esmond's care, blazed and crackled away splendidly. Minx, after devoting a reasonable time to dissecting fowl-bones, took up the central position on the hearth, and blinked alternately at the fire and at us. We cracked nuts, roasted chestnuts, and chatted incessantly. Mr. Esmond, it appeared, had been a ship doctor, and the boys listened breathlessly to descriptions of a volcanic eruption in Java, a ride through a Brazilian forest, and, of course, a shipwreck. Then it came out that Mr. Esmond and Miss Hanway were both Whitby folk, which brought up crowds of old memories of their childhood, ending with their mutual agreement that there was no place on earth at all worthy to be compared to their "north countree."

"Does anyone know any carols?" I asked.

Yes, they did; and so we started singing, the children soon catching the refrain. We ended by Mr. Esmond singing Tennyson's beautiful poem, "Ring out, Wild Bells!" He had a good tenor voice, and did it justice. I saw the tears running down the widowed mother's cheeks, and the hard lines of care smoothing themselves out of Miss Hanway's face; silent witnesses to the power there is in noble words nobly rendered!

Our evening went all too quickly, and when we separated, I think we all felt that the coming year would have many of its troubles lightened by the friendly sympathy that would remain as a living memorial of our Happy Christmas.

A. E. MANSFORD.

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THEY told Lord Erskine that a certain man was "dead, and that he had left £200,000." His lordship replied, "That's a poor capital to begin the next world with."

# FOOD AND DRINK.

BY JOSEPHA CRANE,

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## VI.—Milk.

NATURE intended milk to be the sole food of certain animals when young, and it resembles the egg in that it contains all the elements that are needed for the growth and maintenance of the body. Medical writers consider it a "type of an alimentary substance." Good milk is a white, or very faintly buff-tinted liquid, quite free from any viscidity, and when heated it undergoes no change.

If you were to examine milk under a microscope, you would see that it is a clear liquid, holding in suspension a quantity of little particles or globules, which serve to make it opaque. These globules being of a fatty nature, lighter than the liquid round them, rise to the top, and form what is called cream. The ingredients of milk are—

Nitrogenous matter,
Fatty matter,
Lactine or sugar of milk,
Mineral matter, and
Water.

When milk becomes sour it coagulates, and this is owing to the separation of the casein and the butter, and it is not caused by heat. When milk is simply boiled, it is covered over with a scum or skin of oxidised casein.

When you consider that nearly everyone takes milk daily, once or more, in some form or other, it is obvious that to secure the very best is a matter of great importance. Of course, for children it is even of greater consequence to see that what forms their chief source of nourishment is pure and good. You must remember that milk rapidly decomposes, and in hot weather it is spoilt in a few hours. It is also very liable to be contaminated.

There is little doubt that water is added to milk very often, in order to make it go further, and so cheapen it; but even when this is not done, as all dairy vessels are washed out more than once a day, milk in this way comes into contact with water. Of course, if the latter is perfectly pure and good, no harm is done as far as health is concerned; but if it is not, much mischief results from it. If the pans, etc., were scoured with boiling water, harm in that way would be averted.

One of the chief ways in which typhoid fever, scarlet fever, and diphtheria are propagated is by milk thus contaminated. If the water contains the smallest amount of sewage matter it is, of course, most dangerous, particularly, as sometimes happens, when that matter contains the excreta of people suffering from infectious diseases. Dr. Murchison and Mr. Ernest Hart, who have studied this subject thoroughly, decided that the great epidemic of typhoid fever in Marylebone in 1873 was traceable to a single case at a farm in the country, which was in the habit of supplying milk to a dairy in that parish. There were 218 cases of fever among the customers of that dairy, and of these twenty-six died. Since then eighty-one separate epidemics have been caused by the disease-germs being conveyed in the milk supply of a locality.

If you want to test the purity of your milk you can buy a lactometer for 2s. 6d. All you have to do is to float it in a jug of milk, and the figure on its scale which is level with the surface of the milk denotes its specific gravity. If the milk is below 1·030, it is not as good as it should be. The temperature should be 60° Fah. To ensure the milk you get being good, you should take the following precautions, which I quote from an authority on this very important subject.

"First. In country districts, where the consumer is commonly supplied direct from the farm, it should be ascertained that the dairy is completely detached from all the drains of the house and yards, and that the well used for dairy washing is uncontaminated by sewage. It should be an absolute rule that all vessels are scalded once a day, at least, with boiling water.

"Secondly. When in such districts infectious disease occurs in the dairy farm, no milk should be distributed on any pretext, until the sources of infection have disappeared.

"Thirdly. When doubt exists as to the source of milk, as during a fever epidemic, and no milk absolutely beyond suspicion is to be had, it should be well boiled before it is used as food, by which process it is rendered safe. Some of those who have most studied the subject are so impressed with its importance, and especially in relation to the interests of the family, as to advise that all milk should be boiled before it is consumed. . . . Continental travellers will do well to take it in this form, and as it is always thus served for *café au lait* abroad, there is no difficulty in obtaining it at any time.

"Fourthly. In all large towns and in the metropolis, milk should be obtained solely from some extensive organisation of high repute, well known to have made it an absolute principle of its business to distribute milk solely from sources which are held under vigilant supervision by a competent person. Moreover, every can of milk received from the country for distribution should be examined for quality."

All this you may say is a very great deal of trouble; but is not fever or disease a trouble? And remember, "prevention is better than cure."

Though not absolutely harmful, milk is not a desirable beverage at meal times. The liquid which you take with solid food need not be nourishing, and it is rather required to dilute and dissolve what you are eating. However, if you like milk at dinner, a very nice way of lightening it is by adding soda-water to it. People who are learned on the subject of culinary art say that those can best appreciate good cooking who take pure water with their meals. Soda and seltzer, or potash water, with a dash of lemon in it, is an excellent beverage at meals. Milk is extremely nourishing, and it must be remembered that half a pint of it when new contains as much nitrogenous material as a good-sized egg. Milk is often complained of by those who drink it, and who think it does not agree with them. This, in many cases, is because they drink it too quickly. The *American Analyst* says: "If a glass of it is swallowed hastily, it enters into the stomach and there forms in one solid, curdled mass, difficult of digestion; if, on the other hand, the same quantity is sipped, and three minutes at least are occupied in drinking it, then on reaching the stomach it is so divided

that when coagulated, as it must be, by the gastric juice while digestion is going on, instead of being in one hard, condensed mass, upon the outside of which only the digestive fluids can act, it is more in the form of a sponge, and in and out of the entire milk the gastric juice can play freely and perform its functions."

Milk is often made unwholesome by the carelessness with which it is treated in our own homes. It is frequently placed in vessels which have been imperfectly cleaned. All vessels in which milk is placed should be thoroughly cleansed with boiling water and soda.

Feeding-bottles should be carefully washed out with boiling water. Warm water, be it remembered, is useless, and if there are any germs in the milk it only makes them grow. If you use boiling water it has the effect of killing them.

You should not store milk in sculleries and larders, and you should never use vessels made of zinc or lead. If you put milk in a leaden vessel it soon absorbs the salts of the metal, and becomes poisonous.

BUTTERMILK contains less fatty matter than skimmed milk. It is an excellent article of nourishment, containing the nitrogenous matter, sugar, saline matter, and a small portion of the fatty part of the milk. It is much used by the peasantry of many countries, who thrive upon its use.

SKIMMED MILK should always be boiled, and if you add a little sugar to it, it improves it very much.

CONDENSED MILK is usually sold in hermetically sealed tins, which, when open, still retain the contents fresh for a few days. This milk has been devised so that it can never be spoilt by shaking. Dr. King Chambers says: "It certainly is digestible, as is shown by the fact of infants brought up by hand upon it growing fat, and apparently strong." But doctors differ on this subject, some deciding that it is not really nourishing. You should always use soft water for dissolving it. Six-tenths of the water has been dried out of it, and the sweet taste, to which some people object, is only owing to the sugar which has been added to keep it good. It is extremely convenient in travelling, and if you have it by you with tea, sugar, and some biscuits, you can easily make yourself tea at any moment if you also possess that boon to travellers—a spirit lamp.

Milk, whether cows' milk or condensed milk, is used in so many ways that it would take up a great deal of room if I attempted even an imperfect list of its capabilities in a culinary direction.

As some of my readers, like myself, may have found difficulty in making arrowroot quite smooth and without lumps, I will here give them a simple recipe which is satisfactory.

Sweeten some milk to taste, and put it on the fire to boil. Rub some arrowroot quite smooth in a little cold milk, and keep stirring it till the milk begins to boil; then when you see it just rising up, take the spoon out of the arrowroot and cold milk and pour the boiling milk on it at once without any stirring at all. It will mix perfectly at once, thickening without a single lump. You can then beat it up with a spoon, adding a few drops of vanilla or any flavouring you prefer.

It may not be known that pearl barley boiled in milk till it can be rubbed through a sieve makes a very nice substitute for ordinary cornflour puddings.

If you want to imitate human milk, you should dilute good cows' milk by one-third of lukewarm water, sweetening it by means of one-quarter of an ounce of sugar to each pint of milk and water.

A woman's milk, Lehmann tells us, "is generally somewhat gelatinous, and not so dense or solid as that of cows', and, therefore, more easily digested by the child's stomach."

Mothers who nurse their children must practise self-denial for the sake of the ease and comfort of baby. Experience has shown pretty plainly that if they eat fruit and green vegetables, or anything sour or acid, their milk is apt to purge and gripe the child.

ASSES' MILK is well known to be most valuable for those who are too delicate to be able to take cows' milk. It is very sweet, and easy to digest.

GOATS' MILK is rather richer than cows' milk, and MARES' MILK contains so much sugar that in Tartary it is fermented and converted into a spirituous liquor known by the name of *Koumiss*.

## CHRISTMAS BELLS.

IN a hospital ward, one Christmas eve,
A woman lay nigh to death,
Sighing the hours of pain away
With fitful, laboured breath.
Near and yet nearer her spirit drew
To the Gate of the Great Unknown,
Till they who watched scarce knew if she lived,
Or whether her soul had flown.

But as they watched, a change came o'er
The woman's wan, grey face;
The sad, dull frown of ceaseless pain
To a strange, glad smile gave place.
Then, with a sudden strength, she cried,
"Hush! what is that? Do you hear?—
Music! Oh, list to those silver tones
That are sounding so sweet and clear.

"They are bells, sweet bells!—the Christmas bells!
I hear them ringing afar,
And I see a gleam as of heaven's own light
Through a door that stands ajar;
And within the doorway, beckoning me,
A Glorious One doth stand!
There!—yonder—look! He holds outstretchèd
A Hand, a piercèd Hand!"

They gently laid her back again—
They heard not the bells she heard,
Nor saw the glimpse of heavenly things
Her failing powers had stirred.
She smiled again. "I have seen the King,
And He bids me come," she said;
With a sigh she ceased to speak, and they knew
That her soul to the King had fled.

From a neighbouring church the bells rang out
To welcome the Christmas morn,
And tell to the world in a chorus sweet
That the Saviour of men was born.
But she who had heard the bells of heaven
Knew nought of the earth bells' sound,
For her soul, to the music of heaven's own bells,
Was borne where the blest are found.

D.

"Is your husband not well?" inquired Mrs. Spring. "He looked but poorly as he passed me in the street just now."

"He was well enough this morning," replied Mrs. Eastwynd. "He is rather put out because"—she hesitated—"we had a few words; he annoyed me, and I told him what I thought of him."

"What was wrong, if one may enquire?" questioned Mrs. Spring.

"Not much, certainly," replied her friend, looking slightly foolish. "I arrange the dressing-table in a certain way, and it annoys me to see things out of place; my husband is so careless, he *will not* put his shaving-case in the right spot. I have spoken about it many times; this morning it was out of place again, and I spoke out pretty sharply." Here Mrs. Eastwynd's colour rose, and her eyes gave forth a gleam, so that Mrs. Spring could easily conceive the manner of the "speaking out."

"You know," continued Mrs. Eastwynd, with a complacent smoothing down of her apron, "I'm one of those who like to say out just what I think. I'm not one to consider and take second thoughts; it all comes out, and then it's over, and I feel better." And from the tone of her voice and the lifting of her head it was plain that Mrs. Eastwynd thanked some inscrutable power that she was not as some other men or other women.

"Like to speak out," do you, Mrs. Eastwynd? Yes, we are sure you do; it appears to give you every satisfaction to shoot out your arrows; but do the recipients of these instruments of war like it equally well? The worst of it is, Mrs. Eastwynd, you like the "speaking out" to be all on one side (your own, of course), and are properly indignant if anyone ventures to pay you back in your own coin.

"It comes out, and it is over," is it? Well, the explosion of a powder magazine takes only a second of time, but there

"To a strange glad smile gave place." p. 184.

are apt to be lying around afterwards a few unclaimed limbs, not to speak of general wreckage.

"You feel better;" but do those on whom you exercise your tongue feel equally well?

By implication you pass censure on the people who do *not* "say out just what they think;" but if everybody followed your plan it would be Babel over again. Possibly it does not occur to you that these same people have to pull the rein very tightly to restrain their tongues from rushing to meet yours; as you are so fond of giving the rein to your own tongue, you are in a position to appreciate the extent of their self-denial.

"Second thoughts;" they *are* best nineteen times out of every twenty. It doesn't do to have second thoughts about jumping out of the way of a mad bull or an express train, but to "think twice before you speak once" is good advice for you and for me, Mrs. Eastwynd; we shall have the less to repent of at the end of life if we act up to it.

"It comes out, and it is over." Is it over? Don't you find that practice makes perfect? Don't you find that one outbreak leads the way to another? You are quite astonished if the unlucky ones on whom you whet your tongue do not sweetly pass the words in at one ear and out at the other; you forget that somewhere between these two orifices lie nerves that quiver to the strident tones and pass them on to mind and memory.

Next time you feel like "having it out," do, my dear Mrs. Eastwynd, practise on a person who is deaf and blind; you may thus relieve your mind without doing damage to any one but yourself.

IRIS.

## OUR SONS.

"Ah! happy years, once more who would not be a boy!"

So sings the poet, and the words call up to mothers' minds, the careless, rollicking boyhood, brightening our homes, so full of life and fun, apparently so indifferent to the ills and pains of existence.

Yet boy-life has troubles and heart-aches, hidden away under that careless lightheartedness, which we are so apt to disbelieve in or altogether ignore; there are many men who could not look back upon their childhood as their golden days, and to-day we have boys, lonely or misunderstood, depreciated or else spending their days in a constant struggle to keep pace with the expectations of those who train them. Many boys have their tempers spoiled, their ideals of girlhood and womanhood lowered, and their views of their own possibilities stunted by the badgery of a group of sisters, unkind only through thoughtlessness perhaps; by them the unfortunate boy is hustled hither and thither, always in the way, wanted by none except as a universal messenger, shut out from family council and girlish discussions—"only a boy, a bother of a boy." Of course, we know that boys are sadly trying to sisterly nerves; they will tease and play practical jokes and laugh at their sisters' feminine niceties; but, girls, be patient with them, "it is their nature to," and only time will alter the peculiarity.

We may think in the majority of cases things are happily different, and only boys with morbid tendencies are lonely, misunderstood, or in any way made miserable. It is well if such cases are exceptional, but surely where morbidness does exist, our motherly love and tenderness are more than ever needed. Boys are strange creatures—every mother acknowledges that, with a sigh, at some time or other. They are not easy to characterise or to understand, being mostly known by their needs, desires and dislikes, which rise and show themselves every day, and are expressed in obvious language. They are full of busy life, manifested either in activity of brain or fingers, which has to be worked off in some way. It is well if the mother can give them opportunities for manual labour. Be boys rich or poor, bookish or non-bookish, employment for the hands is a wise thing; more especially, perhaps, for boys with little taste or aptitude for acquiring knowledge.

The training of a child is a grave responsibility, and when that child is a boy, the responsibility weighs most heavily upon a mother's heart. She looks ahead and sees her darling out in the rough world, surrounded by evils, all the more terrible to her because she has only a vague idea of what they are; she knows she cannot shield him from them, but if the true maternal instinct be in her heart she will do her utmost to prepare him to face them; she will teach him that the world is not merely "A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure," but a battle-field upon which he has foes to meet and to conquer.

We do not want our sons to grow up with the idea that "making money, getting on in the world," are the sole objects of existence; that they came here for that purpose chiefly. We want to give them wider and more philanthropic views, and on this point boys are apt pupils. It is not true, as some assert, that men are only spurred on by self-advantage, and that at the bottom of every action we shall find selfishness. Rather is there truth in the words of Carlyle: "It is not to taste sweet things but to do noble and true things, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, and the meanest drudge kindles into a hero." In the heart of nearly every boy we shall find the germ of this desire to be heroic, this love of doing good to others, and if we watch and guard it we may develop it into a principle bearing down all lower and more selfish aims.

Let us teach our sons how closely all human beings are bound to one another, how impossible it is to live an independent life. The school-boy influences those with whom he comes in contact, in the play-ground as well as in the school-room, and everyone *must* leave the world a little better or worse than he found it. Such teaching gives to a boy's life significance and interest; he sees possibilities not bounded by his present proscribed limits.

Every youth when he begins life imagines he is going to be a prince, a hero or a martyr. Time and a little of the world's rough schooling soon show him how little likely he is to be any of the three. Then he will fall back on his mother's teaching, and it will be well for him if that was of the right kind. This life, though robbed of its earliest illusions, will not seem ordinary or commonplace, every action will have its significance, for there is no action so slight or so mean but that it may be done to a great purpose and ennobled therefrom, and he will have before him two greatest of all purposes—pleasing God, and leaving the world better than he found it.

ISABEL SUART ROBSON.

## DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

When the outside world is dull and heavy, every effort should be put forth to make home bright and cheery, and we would advise our younger readers, in choosing materials for dresses to select bright colours. All shades of ruby are in great demand this winter, and are serviceable and becoming to dark and fair alike. Those who may have dark dresses by them will be glad to learn that plastrons, made of soft broché surah, or printed crépe de chine, will be much worn this season, and will be of the utmost utility, as they enable one to wear the same gown for a considerable time (and yet not be always dressed in the same way). Most

*a.* *b.*

Fig. 34.

walking costumes are in cloth, and are all distinguished by simplicity of style in making. When well made nothing can exceed their becomingness.

Princess robes have generally a skirt-trimming of fur, passementerie, or astrakhan. Owing to the plain drapings of walking dresses and long straight jackets, smart muffs are said to be indispensable. Perhaps some of our readers may be glad of a few hints on styles for little folks. Fig. 34 shows children's mantles made of checked tweed and camel-hair, 1½ yards of cloaking material being used for the *a*, and 2 yards for the *b* design. The long full skirt of *a* has a deep hem at the bottom, and the top is gathered into a round gathered yoke, which is finished off with a plain band collar with turned out points. A slit in the material forms arm-holes. The closing is made at the fronts with buttons and button-holes. The waist gathers at the back are secured by a strip of lining about 4 in. wide, the band being run through and brought round to the front, where it fastens inside the cloak. *b* is made in a similar way, gathered into a band at the neck, with thick, box-pleated ruche of the material pinked out at the edges; with swing sleeves from the neck. A Swiss band, pointed at back and front, draws the cloak neatly to the waist.

Fig. 35 shows a dress suitable for a girl from eight to twelve, homespun or all-wool Devonshire serge being the most serviceable material for rough wear, and 3 yards of wide material are needed to complete the design. The model dress is made of dark green corduroy. The stuff on the body is pleated back and front over a tight-fitted foundation of lining, and drawn into three small sloping pleats just below the waist. A pleated frill, to be either of the material, velvet, ribbon or lace, trims the neck and one edge of the fronts—where the dress fastens—narrowing off towards the waist. The plain skirt, which would look well adorned with three rows of ribbon, velvet, or military braid in a contrasting shade, is sewn to the bodice and finished with a band and rosette to correspond with the frill or skirt-bands. The full, high sleeve is made with a tight lining drawn in at the wrist by laying two small pleats on the outside. If the skirt has braid or ribbon bands the wrists should be trimmed to match.

Fig. 35.

Fig. 36 shows child's pinafore with worked border of blue and red embroidery in cross-stitch on cambric. The pinafore is 16 in. long, the two widths being sloped from arm-holes to the bottom. The waist-gathers are secured by a strip of material 1 in wide, a running tape being put through the slit and brought round to the right side, where it finishes with a bow of ribbon. The neck is sloped and gathered into a plain band, ornamented with cross-stitch, which work also trims the arm-holes.

Fig. 36.

Flat patterns can be supplied, 34 and 35, 6½d. each; 36, 4½d. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.


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